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THE WISDOM OF THE EAST SERIES

EDITED BY J. L. CRANMER-BYNG, M.C.

MALAY PROVERBS



# Malay Proverbs

Chosen and Introduced

by

SIR RICHARD WINSTEDT  
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## EDITORIAL NOTE

THE object of the editor of this series is a very definite one. He desires above all things that, in their humble way, these books shall be the ambassadors of good-will and understanding between East and West, the old world of Thought, and the new of Action. He is confident that a deeper knowledge of the great ideals and lofty philosophy of Oriental thought may help to a revival of that true spirit of Charity which neither despises nor fears the nations of another creed and colour.

J. L. CRANMER-BYNG.

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## NOTE

THOSE who want fuller collections of Malay proverbs may consult papers by Sir William Maxwell, Sir Hugh Clifford and Mr. J. L. Humphreys in *Journals of the Straits Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* for the years 1878, 1879, 1883, 1891 and 1914.

Those papers provided the bulk of the material for "Malay Proverbs" by E. S. Hose (Government Printing Office, Singapore, 1934).

A collection from the same sources, printed in Malayo-Arabic characters and with a commentary in Malay, was edited by Dr. W. G. Shellabear under the title of "Kiliran Budi" (Singapore, 1906).

A selection of Malay proverbs has been translated into English verse by Mr. A. W. Hamilton (Singapore, 1937).

## INTRODUCTION

"MUCH matter decocted into a few words" was the definition Thomas Fuller gave of a proverb, but Cervantes framed one still better in "short sentences drawn from long experience", the antithesis between the adjectives providing the same salt that every proverb requires. For without the pungency of antithesis, alliteration or rhyme, a saying is unlikely to command the popularity necessary to allow it to rank as a proverb. As for content, it must express a popular opinion, though every race has proverbs dealing with more than one aspect of a problem, more than one standard of conduct and more than one personal mood. A proverb need not, therefore, have universal validity, though it must be capable of wide application, nor must the attempt in this book to arrange Malay specimens according to their main function obscure the applicability of the commonest and best to many contexts. Provided it be epigrammatic and excite curiosity, a proverb may even be cryptic. Generally it expresses the abstract and universal by the concrete and particular, a feature that has made it the stand-by of the inarticulate peasant all over the world, enabling him to utter his views in words, not only intelligible but familiar and hallowed by tradition. Not that all proverbial sayings are concrete. For it is often cited as a tribute to the Greek genius that it could invent abstract proverbs like "consider the end", "avoid extremes" or "nothing is impossible to the diligent", though such aphorisms were the work of the literate and their Asian counterpart is to be found in the maxims of Sanskrit and Chinese philosophy rather than in the wisdom of the hamlet and the rice-field.

The similarity between the proverbs of different peoples may

be due to a common humanity, to similarity of circumstances, to prehistoric contacts or to such historical influences as cosmopolitan trade and international religions like Buddhism, Christianity and Islam. Accordingly, besides exhibiting primitive wisdom and a primitive sense of literary form, proverbs may corroborate an historical surmise or illustrate the components of a civilization.

A proverb may be an expression of popular observation so obvious that it is in no way surprising to find Confucius talk of "treading on thin ice" or St. Augustine refer to "a fish out of water" or the Malay and Lydgate reflecting that "every flow has its ebb". It may, however, be an observation no longer within the daily experience of modern man, so that it will startle him to discover how an eel held by the tail is for the Malay as it was for the Greek the symbol of a "slippery customer".

Two thousand years ago Aristotle wrote of proverbs as "fragments of ancient wisdom preserved amid wreck and ruin for their brevity and aptness". Today it is often argued that among unlettered people thought and its expression are largely of a traditional character, derived ultimately from the great centres of civilization. And this most plausible theory postulates the variation of a saying down the centuries and in different languages and suggests a deeper truth than is ordinarily associated with the description of a proverb as "the wisdom of all and the wit of one". Surely, one imagines, when the Malay declares that something will never occur till "cats have horns" he is adapting to his own fauna the "hare with horns" of the *Vedanta-Sutras*, and surely the Persian, Indian and Malay proverb "You cannot straighten a dog's tail" must have come down from its ancient Sanskrit prototype. In Sanskrit there is another proverb, that "he who does not go out and explore all the earth is a well-frog". For the naturalist the croak of the frog

is more arresting than his fortuitous habitat, so that it would appear to be the Sanskrit literary source rather than field observation which produced the Japanese proverb that "the frog in the well sees nothing of the high seas", the Malay comparison of an untravelled person to "a frog under a coconut shell"<sup>1</sup> and the Afghan saying that "the frog mounted a clod and declared he could see Kashmir". The Malays have a proverb on the different fates of men translated from a Sanskrit proverb as old as the *Mahabharata*—"gourds float and stones sink". For magic and religion they have been indebted to Babylonian, Mongolian, Indian and Arabic sources, and their literature of historical times has been a literature of translation, so that there is no reason to imagine that all their proverbs are of home vintage. A fair idea of their early commercial contacts may be got from finds at Go Oc Eo, a recently discovered port of the old empire of Founan, on the coast of Cochinchina. Besides early pottery and neoliths, the site has yielded 7,000 beads in rock-crystal, cornelian, onyx, amethyst and glass, some of them Roman or pseudo-Roman like beads discovered on the Johore river in Malaya. Seals were unearthed inscribed in characters that were employed in the north of India between the second and fifth centuries A.D. Some fifty intaglios or cameos were found with inscriptions like those on the seals, or with scenes or portraits, some of Indian, some of Roman design. A large glass cabochon has a bearded head in an Iranian cap of Sassanian type. A gold medal has the portrait of one of the Antonines, and a mutilated inscription refers to Marcus Aurelius. An effigy of Antoninus Pius in gold is dated A.D. 150. The

<sup>1</sup> As a Malay well is never dry, it is no place for the frog, so that the Sanskrit proverb had to be adapted. And it seems probable that the Malay found in a half-coconut shell a symbol of that larger "inverted bowl men call the sky".

sailors and traders who frequented such ports must have visited Malaya and made many contacts and they were not dumb.

In Asia, one of the earliest historical agencies for the diffusion of folk-lore was Buddhism, and it may well have been the spread of this international religion that carried to the Malay and to the Japanese a quaint symbol for a tiff between friends—"the teeth sometimes bite the tongue". The Malay proverb that "sparrows mate with sparrows and hornbills with hornbills" also has a counterpart in the Japanese "cows to cows and horses to horses", but it would be going too far, without intermediate evidence, to assert any connection.

Proverbs shared by the Malays and the Siamese may come both from a Buddhist fountain-head and from more recent intercourse over a contiguous frontier. Examples of some common heritage are numerous :

*Running from a tiger to fall in with a crocodile.*

*Teach a crocodile to swim.*

{ *A slip of the tongue may cause the loss of one's fortune ;*  
*A slip of the foot may cause one to fall (from a tree).*

*One can sound the depth of water but the human heart is unfathomable.*

*Even the four-footed elephant will stumble.*

*He who spits at the sky gets it back in his face.*

Several of these proverbs are known throughout Asia. Of the first there is a Sanskrit variant—"running from the scorpion he falls into the jaws of a poisonous snake".<sup>1</sup> In Hindustani

<sup>1</sup> But this idea has been embodied in shapes too diverse for a common source. There is the mediaeval Latin version, "to shun Charybdis and strike upon Scylla"; the English, "out of the frying-pan into the fire"; the German, "out of the rain, under the spout", and the Spanish, "to break the constable's head and take refuge with the sheriff".

one asks, "Who shall teach a fish to swim?" Hebrew, Bengali and Hindustani repetitions of the last example combine to show that it was from the East Italy borrowed "Chi sputa contro il vento si sputa in faccia". In Hindustani and English it is the four-footed *horse* which stumbles.

Since for two thousand years or more there has been commerce between southern India and the Malay peninsula, Malay indebtedness to the folk-lore of India was natural, and even in a small collection of Tamil, Telugu and Kanarese proverbs numerous prototypes for Malay sayings occur :

- When squatting, a cat ; when springing, a tiger (of a warrior).*
- If a dog bark at a mountain, will the mountain suffer ?*
- A dog's tail cannot be straightened.*
- Though he wash three times a day, will the crow become white ?*
- (Vacillating as) a stake swaying in the mud.*
- A garland of flowers in a monkey's paw.*
- A slip of the tongue is worse than a slip of the feet.*
- A gem is a gem, though found on a dunghill.*

There are a few proverbs which the Malay owes to Hindustani :

- The fence devours the crop. (The watchman commits breach of trust as a servant.)*
- Is the quick separate from the nail ? (Of inseparable friends.)*
- Let the snake die but let not the stick be broken.*
- Beat a daughter as a hint to a daughter-in-law.*

In Hindustani there is also a saying, "If I tell, my brother will be beaten ; if I do not, my father will eat dog's flesh", which looks like a variant of the Malay illustration of a dilemma,

"If I spit, mother dies ; if I don't, father dies". For his adoption of several Hindustani proverbs the Malay has to thank the writings of Raffles' teacher, Munshi 'Abdullah, a man half-Arab, half-Indian, of a breed that has always done so much for the Malay's literature of translation. 'Abdullah translated into Malay "Stretch your feet according to the length of your coverlet", the Hindustani and Persian and Spanish version of our "Cut your coat according to your cloth". Another adage introduced by 'Abdullah was "Whoso diggeth a pit shall fall there", a saying found in Hebrew and Persian as well as Hindustani. Yet another Hebrew proverb to express facility, which the Malay must have got from Muslim India, is "drawing a hair through rice-paste", where India prefers "drawing a hair through milk", an article of diet not favoured in the Far East. Another saying from the same Indian source may be one found in Hebrew and Malay to express scrupulosity overdone — "using a torch in daylight".

Proverbs common to Malay, Urdu and Afghan may be attributable to Persian or Arabic, the literary languages of Islam. The Malay saying that "the sun cannot be hidden by a sieve" corresponds to the Arabic and Persian proverb that "no one can plaster over the rays of the sun". "Writ on water" is Hebrew, Persian and Malay for the evanescent, and post-dates a knowledge of writing. The Persian notes that "flies collect where there is a sugar-tub"; the Malay that "where there is sugar, there are ants". The Arab and the Persian remark that "the barking of a dog does not hurt the clouds"; the Malay has preferred the Tamil version that it "does not cause a mountain to collapse". The Persian symbolizes the obscure by the image that "the night is black and the cow is black", and the Malay figures the undiscovered criminal as "a black fowl flying by night". If some of these parallels are not identical,

yet they all appear to be of Asiatic origin and, however distantly, to be related.

The Persian, Afghan and Malay each have a proverb, " You cannot clap with one hand ", and it has travelled to China. Chinese and Malays have a dozen or more identical sayings, a remarkably small number considering that contact between them goes back to prehistoric times. It is no mark of antiquity that the commonplaces shared by the two races contain no references to literary examinations or to the solitude of cities. Few Chinese emigrants were scholars, and the circumstances of the Malay would have ruled out sophisticated topics. Only one of the proverbs employed by both races deals with learning :—

{ *Studious men to growing grain a perfect likeness bear :*  
*Unstudious men to jungle grass we aptly may compare.*

That is a rendering of the Chinese version, and the Malay equivalent so far from being a popular adaptation bears all the marks of a laboured translation.

A proverb found in Manipur as well as in China and Malay is, " No wind, no motion in the trees ". And most of the Chinese proverbs for which Malay equivalents exist suggest by their zoology an Indian source :—

*Out of the wolf's den into the tiger's mouth.*

*A dying leopard leaves his skin ; a dying man his spots.*

*The snake would swallow the elephant.*

Others used both by Malays and Chinese are of uncertain origin :

*It is for man to scheme ; it is for heaven to accomplish.*

*Though a tree grow ever so high, the falling leaves return to the root.*

{ *Profits equally share ;*

*Losses equally bear.*

The last of these aphorisms is further elaborated by the ingenious Minangkabau Malays of Negri Sembilan :

{ *Together slice the heart of the elephant ;*  
 { *Together dip the heart of the louse.*

Only in the tribal lays of these Minangkabaus do we find anything approaching the tiresome abundance of sententious maxims which Chaucer poured into his "Tale of Melibeus"—maxims which the Elizabethans ransacked the classics, French, Italian and Spanish, to discover as incrustations for their ornate prose. The fifteenth-century "Malay Annals" cite only three proverbs :

*Do not teach a tiger-cub to eat flesh.*

*Pushing a pillow under a somnolent man.*

*Pounding pepper to curry a bird on the wing.*

The story of the fifteenth-century Malacca swashbuckler, Hang Tuah, contains a saying that "an onion is spoilt by the weight of its bloom", but few Malays have heard it or are aware that it refers to one ruined by showy display. Nor have Malays adopted for popular use a Persian proverb in their fifteenth-century version of the tale of Muhammad Hanafiah that "one should not expect good faith from a bad man, as washing will not make a negro white". The old Malay version of "The Tales of a Parrot" also contains a few proverbs like "money is a fetter for fools" and "a wife is a pair of shoes without which the foot of the husband is harmed", but neither of these foreign sentiments fall within the interests or philosophy of the Malay peasant, who does not wear shoes, has never humbled women and has had no superfluity of cash. Three Malay proverbs refer to characters famous in Muslim legends :

*As great as Ommaya*—a warrior in the story of Amir Hamza, noted for stratagems.

*To find Korah* (famous for wealth) *come to the surface*—that is, to stumble on good luck.

*To work like Gog and Magog*—hastily and roughly.

But not till we reach Munshi 'Abdullah in the nineteenth century do we encounter a writer in Malay who frequently quotes sententious maxims, some derived from alien fauna and most of them lacking the pointed brevity of sayings current in village and market-place :

*A horse is by nature a horse and a mule a mule.*

*However big the whale may be, the tiny harpoon can rob him of life.*

'Abdullah even has a version of Herrick's lines—

*Small griefs have tongues ; full casks are ever found  
To give, if any, yet but little sound.*

And there are Malay versions of several proverbs printed in George Herbert's "Jacula Prudentium".

*Although it rain, cast not away the watering-pot.*

*The ill weed marreth a whole pot of pottage.*

*Give a clown a finger and he'll take a hand.<sup>1</sup>*

It is unthinkable that European traders brought no proverbs to the Malay. In view of their popularity in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries they must have been bandied in the streets of Portuguese and Dutch Malacca. The Malay has an elaborate

<sup>1</sup> This last adage is neater than its Malay equivalent, " Give the leg and he'll want the thigh ". The interest evinced by proverb-makers in the body is curious. *Frons occipitio prior*, " The forehead comes before the nape " is a Roman adage ; the Malay says, " The thigh is nearer than the knee ", and the Spaniard, " My teeth are nearer to me than my kindred ".

equivalent of the Iberian adage that "many things grow in a garden that are never planted there". The sayings "like cup and cover" and "putting fire to flax" are found in Malay as in English. *Kata itu kota* is a strained translation of "a man's word is his bond" and the Malay proverb that "buffaloes are held by cords and man by his words" is clearly a rendering of our saying that "an ox is taken by his horns and man by his tongue". There is also an English proverb (traced back to 1651)—"a man would live in Italy but he would die in Spain", which looks like a model for the Malay traditional recommendation of Malacca for food, Batu Bara for clothes and Palembang for dying.

Corroboration that in gleaning Malay proverbs we are picking much alien corn comes from another quarter. For it cannot be accident that the sayings with foreign affinities are current only among coastal Malays, whose forebears felt the full force of immigrant trade and missionary religions. These travelled saws have two characteristics to be expected in acceptable imports. They are easy to interpret and they are of wide application. In these respects they differ entirely from the proverbs of the inland Minangkabaus, whose inventions are for the needs of matriarchal tribes and are intelligible—most of them—only to those who know the bleat of the Minangkabau pen. Minangkabau sayings bear the mark of the home-keeping village wiseacre, anxious to confound and delight his little clan by cryptic profundities. Generally they are not understood outside a Minangkabau colony.

*Moved, it fades; transplanted, it dies.*<sup>1</sup>

Other Malays interpret this conundrum to refer to a hopeless

<sup>1</sup> For the Malay of this and the following Minangkabau sayings, see the Appendix.

case or to obstinate refusal to recant : actually, it refers to the risk of innovation in matriarchal customary law.

*Held straight, it passes ; athwart, it gets broken.*

The ordinary Malay interprets this to mean " All is fish that comes to his net " : actually it prescribes correct legal procedure.

*To one sugar-palm two ladders,  
To one host two familiars*

is taken often as a description of a girl with two lovers : actually it refers to a liaison by a Minangkabau man with a woman of his wife's tribe.

But tribal references apart, Minangkabau sayings are difficult.

*The noise of blows in the forest is the noise of rending ;  
The noise of the outer wedge is the noise of bringing together.*

No one but a woodsman could guess that this description of quarrelling and accord is taken from the wedges that split tree-trunks and the wedges that tighten the binding of faggots."

*Pound rice in a mortar ;  
Boil rice in a pot*

is an oblique adjuration to correct procedure in accordance with customary law ; appeal to the right authority, for example.

The Minangkabau Malay has hundreds of proverbs that for him still have a function, and in his tribal lays he sows them by the sack,

*Read from alif !*

*Count from one !*

*The greatness of men lies in taking counsel together ;  
The greatness of prophets in performing miracles ;  
As a bamboo conduit makes a round jet of water,  
So taking counsel together rounds men to one mind.*

*Crime leaves a trail like a water-beetle ;  
 Like a snail, it leaves its shine ;  
 Like a horse-mango it leaves its reek.  
 A stream that knows not its source or its mouth,  
 Like that is a man who cannot account for his doings.  
 Where a dog barks is where the iguana climbs ;  
 Where bamboos are uprooted is where plants flourish ;  
 Where the tree has fallen is where mushrooms grow ;  
 The glint of an adze falls on a man's foot ;  
 The glint of a knife on his hands.*

All or any one of this last bunch of sayings may be heard any day from a Minangkabau discussing the circumstantial evidence for a crime. And only a Minangkabau will allude to the pursuit of a clue by the cryptic utterance that

*If there is a handle, it can be held ;  
 If there is a cord, it can be pulled.*

A disappointed litigant in Negri Sembilan will blame the judge who is "expert as a flying lemur" in pouncing on such a godsend as a suitor who will "dig him in the ribs" and offer a fat bribe, so that justice becomes as unequal as

*A lime sour on one side ;  
 A boat capsized at one end.*

What could be done in the old days ? The chief

*Held the pumpkin and held the knife ;  
 If he cut a thick slice, none could restrain him ;  
 To cut a thin slice, no one could command him.*

Elders might regard an obstreperous offender as a mad buffalo with

*Rope broken, cheek-cord broken,  
Nose-ring broken, nostril torn.*

He for his part might retort with a sarcastic jingle :

*"Cluck" cries the hen ! "Chirrup" cries the robin.  
A hunchback at his plaiting blunders (with the bobbin).<sup>1</sup>*

It would give a wrong impression of Malay society to take leave of proverbs in this Minangkabau backwater. "A man of fashion never has recourse to proverbs", Lord Chesterfield wrote to his son, and the remark applies to those about a Malay court and to the educated town Malay who wears European clothes and talks English. But everywhere the peasant still employs them. It is not only easier to quote than to frame new words for an idea, but in village argument an apt quotation commands applause and victory. The Malay is outgrowing his proverbs, but a study of their history and of their content still has a practical bearing. The internationalism of so many Malay sayings reveals the intellectual curiosity of the Malay, and his borrowings illustrate an independence of outlook that has picked only material suited to his cynical and fatalistic realism. If there is no romance in his proverbs, there is no false sentiment. Affection and rhodomontade are absent as well as chivalry and love. Work is a necessity, not a virtue. Woman ? There is "more than one flower in the world". A flower may be scentless, and all flowers fade, however they may pretend to be buds again. Wives ? If you love them, you should leave them at times. Marry a widow ? Why not ? You will have step-children at your beck and call. Even divorce is a social embarrassment rather than a passionate disaster. Old age is unhonoured and old men are often foolish. Death, too, is a

<sup>1</sup> A translator's poetic licence, as bobbins are not used for plaiting.

natural phenomenon. "The flower and the bud drop as well as the ripe and the old." And after death? There is no mention of heaven or hell in a Malay proverb. For the Malay has none of the fanaticism of the Arab, with his cry that "there are no fans in hell". Only one Malay saying refers obliquely to the supernatural, and that one belongs to the primitive stage of human thought which inspired the English saying "Do not swear in a boat or you'll catch no fish". Excess of all kinds is deprecated. The Malay shakes his head over the amorist for whom everything with scales is a fish. As a moralist he counsels the eschewing of evil and the doing of a reasonable amount of good. He is perpetually conscious of the vagaries of fate and fortune. The nearest approach he makes to enthusiasm is in his admiration for the expert, who can let the boat heel without capsizing her, or put the right amount of lemon-grass in the curry. All these preferences and limitations are apparent in the repertory of proverbs accumulated by the Malay. To a large extent their appositeness is accidental. For practical realism is the note of the proverb all over the world.

One feature that makes Malay proverbs valuable and fascinating for all students of the race is the light they throw on its environment and interests. Whole sets of proverbs centre round the dog, the tiger, the crocodile, the elephant. From time immemorial the coastal Malay has been a seaman and a fisherman, and it must suffice here to note the proverbs he has drawn from boats and ships and fishing. A bankrupt is "bare as a swabbed ship". "One ship with two captains" is a euphemism for a girl with two lovers. "A ship in tow of a dinghy" is a great man influenced by parasites. And a man struggling with fate is "a ship in the swing of the waves". The home of a henpecked man is as incongruous as a boat "with the rudder in the bows". Need for energetic action is urged

by the remonstrance that "reluctance to paddle lets a boat drift". Superfluous effort is ridiculed by a saying that, "if one paddles when the current is carrying one downstream, even the crocodiles will laugh". And luck may favour casual exertion : "one pull of the oar may leave two or three islands behind and a random effort settle one's debts". But if a dawdler has to be reproached, there is an oblique way of doing it :—"while you were fetching your paddle, I've crossed the river". Any ill-timed action is like "launching a boat in a drought". Whatever happens, regret is futile, for "when you find you've gone too far downstream in the dark, words are useless". Of course, what makes it worse is that your companions know who blundered ; they can "guess the paddler from the ripples". The expert sailor "lets his boat heel but does not capsize". If his crew lets him down, they will be as treacherous as "a sail knocking down the mast". Symbols of disaster are "a mast that breaks and smashes the rudder" and "a rudder smashed along with its cross-piece". But "when a ship breaks up, it is the sharks that get their fill" ; it is an "ill wind that brings no one any good". One must never make light of the sea : "though but a span in breadth, it is still the ocean". "Deep as the sea is, it can be fathomed ; none can tell the thoughts of a man." For "just as a boat finds scope at sea, so the mind finds it in reflection".

Many proverbs spring from the musings of the Malay fisherman. There are several expressions for "a fish in the trap" to denote a person "in a hole" or "up a tree". Variants are "a prawn in a creel", "a perch (stranded) in the shallows" and "a fish poisoned by *tuba* root". "*Tuba* may be spoilt and no fish caught" : one's expenditure may be wasted. This is hard on the man of limited means whom the Malay dubs "a fishing-boat" (too small to go out to sea). A keen man will

be on the spot ; his " net is cast as the fish flashes into sight ". Such a man may be a trimmer " playing his line " but he will not set out " with one hook and one bait, for then once the line breaks, the day is spent in idle drifting ". Even if one go well provided, " bait may be finished and no fish be caught ". For disappointment is the lot of man. " One may lower a seine-net and catch nothing." " One may thrust a trap over a fish " on the shore " and catch a tree-trunk." Yet one must not be elated by good fortune or depressed by adversity, " cheer if one catches a fish and scowl if one catches a snag ". Everywhere anglers are the same ; " the fish that gets away is the big one ". They are keen observers of nature. They note the speed of " the eel whose tail has been nipped ", of " a fish returning to its pool " and of " the murrel escaped from a trap ". They dub a miser " a rock crab ". They see girls hopping about as " restless as prawns leaping in a creel ". Instead of complaining crudely that many a man has been ruined by women, they remark that " fish perish through bait ". A braggart the Malay likens to the globe-fish that puffs himself out. A pauper is wretched like " a fish (out of water) in the sun ". " Little fish are eaten by big " ; the great prey on the humble, and their administration of justice is indiscriminate as " the law of the fish-creel ", which is thrust down over any fish within its radius. Still, it is futile to be jealous of the rich with their many possessions ; " why envy the featherback because it has both scales and bones ? " There is, however, no reason to be a toady, " as foolish as the perch that likes to be caught on a golden hook ".

On one subject, the weather, no Malay proverbs are founded. In a region of perpetual summer, March never " comes in like a lion " or " goes out like a lamb ", and there is no inclement Christmas to " make a fat graveyard ".

## MALAY PROVERBS

1. Ada laut, ada-lah ikan.
2. Gulai sedap, nasi mentah ; nasi sedap, gulai mentah.
3. Malang ta' bolēh di-tolak, mujor ta' bolēh di-raih.
4. Untong sabut timbul, untong batu tenggelam.
5. Tuah melambong tinggi, chelaka menimpa badan.
6. Sa-besar-besar bumi, aku tampar ta' kena.
7. Kalau telan, mati emak ; kalau ludah, mati bapa.
8. Kalah, jadi abu : menang, jadi arang.
9. Di-genggam, takut mati : di-lepaskan, takut terbang.

## I. MAN AND THE UNIVERSE

### THE WAY OF THE WORLD

1. Where there is sea, there are pirates.
2. When the curry is good, the rice is half cooked ; when the rice is good, the curry is half cooked.
3. Bad luck cannot be averted nor good luck attracted.
4. It is the fate of the coconut husk to float, of the stone to sink.
5. Good luck soars away and misfortune crushes one's body.
6. Huge though the world is, I always miss when I hit at it.

### HOBSON'S CHOICE

7. Swallow it, one's mother dies ; reject it and one's father dies.
8. Vanquished, one will be reduced to ash ; victorious, to charcoal.
9. There is the fear that if grasped it may die, and fly away if released.

10. Pipit tuli makan berhujan, di-halau kain basah, ta' di-halau,  
padi habis.

11. Jangan chakap chabul di-sungai, buaya ganas.

12. Hitam mata itu, di-mana 'kan bolēh bercherai dengan  
putēh-nya ?

13. Baik tunang-nya jahat,  
Hidup tunang-nya mati,  
Kasēh tunang-nya cherai.

14. Banyak udang, banyak garam-nya ;  
Banyak orang, banyak ragam-nya.

15. Laut yang dalam dapat di-duga ;  
Hati orang siapa tahu ?

16. Kita semua mati, tetapi kubor masing-masing.

17. Bunga pun gugor, putēk pun gugor, tua pun gugor, masak  
pun gugor.

10. Deaf sparrows are eating (your rice) out in the rain ; drive them away and you will get wet ; if they are not driven away, the rice will be finished.

## DO NOT SWEAR IN A BOAT

11. Do not use bad language on a river or the crocodiles will grow fierce.

## RELATIVITY

12. The black of the eye and the white, how can they be parted ?

13. The betrothed of good is evil,  
The betrothed of life is death,  
The betrothed of love is divorce.

## MAN

14. Many shrimps, many condiments !  
Many men, many temperaments !

15. The deep sea can be fathomed, but who knows the hearts of men ?

16. We all die but have different graves.—(We are all “in the sea of ~~life~~ enisled ”.)

17. Flowers and buds fall, and the old and ripe fall.

18. Orang yang bertanam pokok nyior, kadang-kadang tiada makan buah-nya.
19. Lain di-niat, lain di-takdir.
20. Ayēr di-tulang buimbongan, ka-mana turun, kalau tidak di-chuchoran atap ?
21. Ka-mana tumpahkan kuah, kalau tidak ka-nasi ?
22. Satu tangan bilangan lima,  
Dua tangan bilangan sa-puloh.  
Sahaya bertanam biji delima,  
Apa sebab peria tumboh ?
23. Kuching bertandok.
24. Kura-kura pandai kerabat kayu.
25. Burong terbang di-sambar ikan.

## PLANT PEARS FOR HEIRS

18. The man who plants a coconut-palm sometimes does not eat the fruit.

## MAN PROPOSES, GOD DISPOSES

19. Man's designs and God's decrees differ.

## NATURAL LAWS

20. Water on a roof-top must run down to the eaves.

21. Where else is gravy poured except on rice?

## BUT THE INCONCEIVABLE MAY HAPPEN

22. I find one hand has fingers five,  
I count up ten upon the two.  
What was the matter, man alive?  
Pomegranate planted and gourd grew.

## THE NEVER NEVER LAND

23. (Where) cats have horns.

24. (Where) the tortoise has learnt to climb trees.

25. (Where) the flying bird is caught by a fish.

26. Hujan balik ka-langit.
27. Timor beralēh sa-belah barat.
28. Lobok jadi pantai, pantai jadi lobok.
29. Batu besar berguling turun, batu kecil berguling naik.

26. (Where) rain returns to the sky.
27. (Where) east shifts west.
28. (Where) pools become beaches and beaches pools.
29. (Where) rocks roll down and pebbles roll up.—(When the rich fall and the poor rise.)

30. Gigi dengan lidah ada kala-nya bergigit juga.

31. Bagai pinggan dengan mangkok, salah sadikit hendak berantok.

32. Ayēr di-chenchang tiada putus.

33. Charēk-charēk bulu ayam, lama-lama ia berchantum pula.

34. Tali yang tiga lembar itu ta' suang-suang putus.

35. Kalau sa-pohon kayu banyak akar-nya lagi tegoh, apa di-takutkan ribut ?

36. Daun dapat di-layang, getah jatoh ka-perdu juga.

37. Dekat paha daripada lutut.

## II. SOCIETY

### THE FAMILY

30. Teeth sometimes bite the tongue.—(The best of friends may bicker.)
31. (Some relatives are like) plate and cup, ready to collide on slight provocation.
32. Water hacked is not severed—(any more than the family bond is severed by a quarrel).
33. Pluck a fowl's feathers to tatters and in time they grow together again.
34. A rope of three strands is not easily parted.
35. If a tree has roots many and firm, there is no need to fear the tempest.
36. A (distant) leaf may fly away on the wind but sap drops at the foot of the (parent) tree.
37. The thigh is closer than the knee.—(" Nearer is my coat than my skin " ≡ " Charity begins at home "—with the family.)

38. Bersaksi kapada lutut.
39. Di-chubit paha kanan, kiri pun sakit juga.
40. Kechil-kecil, anak ; kalau sudah besar, menjadi onak.
41. Potong hidong, rosak muka.
42. Tepok ayēr di-dulang, teperchēk muka sendiri.
43. Mahu-kah orang menghujangkan garam-nya ?
44. Anak sendiri di-sayang, anak tiri di-bēngkēng.
45. Kerbau punya susu, sapi punya nama.
46. Gaharu di-bakar, kemenyan berbau.
47. Hilang jasa beliong, timbul jasa rimbas.
48. Bagai-mana chētak, bagitu-lah kuēh-nya.
49. Bapa borēk, anak-nya tentu berintēk.

38. To call the knee to be one's witness—(to call a close relative to give evidence for one).

39. Pinch the right thigh and the left feels it.

40. A child—when newly born ;  
But grown up—a thorn.

## DON'T WASH DIRTY LINEN IN PUBLIC

41. Cut off your nose and you spoil your face.

42. Smack water in a dish and your own face gets spattered.

43. Does any one want to put his own salt out in the rain ?

## FAVOURITISM

44. One's own child is loved ; at a step-child one snaps.

45. The wild cow gets the credit for the buffalo's milk.

46. Lignum aloes is burnt, but benzoin gets credit (for the fragrance).

47. The work of the adze is forgotten and that of the plane is noted.

## → LIKE FATHER LIKE SON

48. As the mould is, so is the cake.

49. If the father is spotted, the children will be speckled.

50. 'Ibarat dawat dengan kertas,  
Bila bolēh renggang terlepas ?

51. Saperti aur dengan tebing.

52. Bila tersepit, chari kita.

53. Daripada bersahabat dengan orang yang bodoh baik  
berseteru dengan orang yang berakal.

54. Beberapa lama kemarau, timpa hujan, bumi basah.

55. Retak menanti pechah.

56. Putus benang, bolēh di-ikat ;  
Patah arang, sudah sa-kali.

57. Laksana batil gangsa, retak ta' bolēh di-hubong tampong.

58. Ular bukan, ikan pun bukan.

59. Bunga bukan sa-kaki, kumbang bukan sa-ekor.

## FRIENDS

50. Inseparable as ink and paper.

51. (Inseparable as) the bamboo and the river-bank.

52. When in a tight place, they come to us.

53. Better a feud with the clever than friendship with the fool.

## QUARRELS

54. However long the weather may be fine, a fall of rain is damping.—(A quarrel dissolves the longest friendship.)

55. The crack awaits a break.—(The rift in the lute.)

56. Broken cord can be joined ; break charcoal and the break is for ever.—(Some quarrels can be mended, others not.)

57. Like a bronze bowl, in which a crack cannot be patched.

## THE MISFIT

58. Neither snake nor fish.

## THE SEXES

59. There is more than one flower (= girl) ; there is more than one bee (= boy).

60. Bagai kuching dengan panggang.

61. Tahan rachēk, burong ta' masok ;  
Burong biasa makan di-tangan.

62. Ada gula, ada-lah semut.

63. Asal bersisēk, ikan-lah.

64. Nyior di-tebok tupai.

65. Di-tuba sahaja-kah ikan ? Di-jala-jaring bukan-kah ikan ?

66. Daripada berputing, baik berhulu.

67. Bunga di-petēk, perdu di-tendang.

68. Musoh di-dalam selimut.

69. Kemudi di-haluan.

70. Apa sakit berbini janda ?  
Anak tiri bolēh di-suroh.

60. Like cat and roast (is a boy with a girl).
61. In vain is the snare set for the bird ; she is accustomed to being fed by hand.—(There cannot be courtship by proxy.)
62. Where there is sugar, there are ants.
63. Provided it has gills (*or scales*), it is a fish to him.—(All is fish that comes to the net of the amorist.)
64. The young coconut is bored by a squirrel.—(The maid is deflowered.)
65. Are those caught by the poison of *tuba* the only fish ?  
Are not those netted also fish ?—(Wife and mistress, plain and comely, women are sisters under their skin.)
66. Better is a hafted than a haftless blade.—(Being married is better than being a bachelor.)
67. The flower is plucked, but the stalk (its parent) is trampled.
68. (A nagging wife is) a foe in the blanket.
69. (When the wife wears the trousers), the rudder is in the bows of the boat.
70. Why worry at marrying a widow ? You will have step-children at your beck and call.

71. Kasēhkan anak, tangis-tangiskan ;  
Kasēhkan bini, tinggal-tinggalkan.

72.  
(a) Lesong menchari antan.  
(b) Ulam menchari sambal.  
(c) Hidong ta' manchong, pipi tesorong-sorong.

73.  
(a) Gajah sa-ēkor, gembala dua.  
(b) Kapal satu, nakhoda dua.

74. Anak kunchi jahat, peti durhaka.

75. Balik kerak.

76. Usul menunjukkan asal.

77. Anjing di-tepok kepala, menjongkit ēkor.

78. Bongkok baharu betul, buta bakaru chelēk.

71. If you love your children, you will slap them sometimes ; if you love your wife, you will leave her sometimes.

72. (Forward husband-hunters are like)

- (a) a mortar chasing a pestle ;
- (b) pickles chasing the *hors d'œuvre*.
- (c) If her nose is snub (for kissing), she'll keep pressing her cheeks against you.

73. (An unfaithful wife is)

- (a) an elephant with two mahouts ;
- (b) a ship with two captains.

74. When the key is at fault, the chest plays traitor.

75. (But to remarry a divorced wife is to) return to the scrapings of the rice-pot.

## MANNERS MAKETH MAN

76. Manners show race.

77. Pat the head of a dog and up goes the (brute's mannerless) tail.

## BEGGARS ON HORSEBACK

78. A hunch-back become straight and a blind man who has just regained his sight.

79. Kalau benēh yang baik, jatoh ka-laut menjadi pulau.

80. Berapa panjang lunjor, bagitu-lah selimut.

81.

- (a) Kachang lupakan kulit.
- (b) Anak kuching menjadi harimau.
- (c) Belalang telah menjadi lang.
- (d) Pachat hendak menjadi ular sawa.
- (e) Chaching menjadi ular naga.
- (f) Pipit hendak telan jagong.
- (g) Pipit hendak meminang anak enggang.

82. Pipit itu sama pipit juga, dan yang enggang sama enggang.

83. Si-chabul hendak menchapaikan bulan.

84. Pala-pala aku hendak mati, biarlah mati berkafan chindai.

85. Kera dapat bunga.

86. Tanam lalang, ta' akan tumboh padi.

## CLASS DISTINCTIONS

79. Good seed, even if it fall into the sea, becomes an island.  
—(Blood will tell.)

80. The length of the coverlet should be that of the stretched body.—(No one should launch out beyond his means and station.)

81. An upstart is—  
 (a) a bean forgetful of the pod ;  
 (b) a kitten that has become a tiger ;  
 (c) a grasshopper that has become a hawk ;  
 (d) a leech eager to be a snake ;  
 (e) a worm that has become a dragon ;  
 (f) a sparrow straining at a corn-cob ;  
 (g) a sparrow eager to be betrothed to a hornbill.

82. Sparrows must mate with sparrows and hornbills with hornbills.

83. A blackguard may aspire to grasp the moon (= a fair and high-placed girl).

84. (For, he thinks) if I have to die, let me have a shroud of silk.

85. A monkey has got a flower.—(A pearl has been cast before swine.)

\*

86. If you plant grass, you won't get rice.

87. Barang di-mana pun, pantat periok itu hitam juga.

88. Sa-chupak itu tiada bolēh menjadi sa-gantang.

89. Kijang di-rantai dengan emas, jikalau ia lepas, lari-lah ia juga ka-hutan makan rumput.

90. Anjing menyalak, mahu-kah bukit runtoh ?

91. Masok kawan gajah, mendering ;  
       Masok kawan ayam, berkокок ;  
       Masok kawan kambing, berdebēk.

92. Kapak naik pemidang.

93. Kapak masok meminang.

94. Bagai aur di-tarēk songsang.

95. Lemah liat kayu akar, di-lentok bolēh, di-patah ta' dapat.

96. Orang baharu kaya, jangan di-utang ;  
       Orang baharu nikah, jangan di-tandang.

97. Sarang tebuhan jangan di-jolok, mati kena ketubong.

87. Everywhere the bottom of a pot is black.

88. A pint cannot become a bushel.

89. A deer with a chain of gold, if she escape, will run off to the forest to eat grass.—(cf. "Bring a cow to the hall and she will run to the byre.")

90. Will a hill crumble at the bark of a dog?—(Will a great man heed the threats of the vile and insignificant?)

## TACT

91. Trumpet in a herd of elephants ;  
     Crow in the company of cocks ;  
     Bleat in a flock of goats.

92. (A tactless man is like) an axe on an embroidery frame.

93. An axe going to arrange a marriage—(is a tactless agent).

94. (Tactless procedure is) like pulling bamboo against its foliage.

95. (A diplomat should be) yielding and supple as a liana that can be bent but not broken.

96. Don't borrow from a *nouveau riche* ; don't visit the newly wed.

97. Don't poke a hornets' nest or you will be stung to death.

98. Pukul anak sindir menantu.

99. Berani mati, takut malu.

100. Biar puteh tulang, jangan puteh mata.

101. Patah tongkat, berjeremang.

102. Berani lalat.

103. Ayam pupoh, sabong ta' bertaji.

104. Ada-kah duri di-pertajam ?

105. Anjing galak, babi berani.

106. Dudok, meraut ranjau ;  
Berdiri, mengintai jauh.

98. To hit a daughter as a hint to a daughter-in-law.—(Oblique criticism.)

## FIGHTING

99. Daring death but afraid of shame.

100. Better one's bones whiten than be put to shame.

101. When the prop goes, he falls back on the buttress.—(He never yields.)

102. The courage of the fly—(who flees and turns to fight again).

103. Sham game-cocks that fight without spurs (= unarmed men).

104. Does one sharpen thorns ?—(Does one arm an enemy ?)

105. The dogs are fierce and the pigs daring.—(Both sides are spoiling for a fight.)

## SEMPER PARATUS

106. If he sits, he is whittling a caltrop ; if he stands, he has his eyes on the horizon.

107. Kechil di-kandong ibu, besar di-kandong 'adat, mati di-kandong tanah.

108. Hujan emas pērak di-negeri orang, hujan keris lembing di-negeri sendiri, baik juga di-negeri sendiri.

109. Menyeladang bagai panas di-padang.

110. Bertelau-telau saperti panas di-belukar.

111. Hukum serkap.

112. Pelandok lupakan jerat, tetapi jerat tiada lupakan pelandok.

113. Ular biar mati, tanah jangan lekok, buloh jangan patah.

### III. GOVERNMENT AND LAW

107. As an infant, man is wrapped in his mother's womb ; grown up, he is wrapped in custom ; dead, he is wrapped in earth.

#### PATRIOTISM

108. Though it rain gold and silver in a foreign land and daggers and spears at home, yet it is better to be at home.

#### JUSTICE

109. Even, it is as the sun on a flat plain.

110. Uneven, it strikes like the sun on a thicket.

111. (Indiscriminate, it delivers) the sentence of the conical trap (pushed down over all the fish within its radius).

#### THE LONG ARM OF THE LAW

112. The mousedeer may forget the snare, but the snare does not forget the mousedeer.

"A MAN ONLY SUSPECTED OF MURDER MAY BE PUT AWAY PRIVILY."—*Perak Laws*.

113. Let the snake die but don't dent the ground or break the bamboo (that smites him).

114. Orang mengantok, di-sorougkan bantal.
115. Ada asap, ada-lah api.
116. Kalau tiada angin, ta' akan pokok bergoyang.
117. Lembu bertandok panjang, tiada menandok pun, di-kata orang ia menandok juga.
118. Aku nampak olak, kelibat hang sudah ku-tahu.
119. Mati rusa karna jijak, mati kuang karna bunyi.
120. Enggang lalu, ranting patah.
121. Matahari (*or* bangkai gajah) bolēh-kah di-tutup dengan nyiru ?
122. Ayam putēh terbang siang, hinggap di-halaman, malah kepada mata orang yang banyak.
123. Ayam hitam terbang malam, hinggap di-pokok pandan, berkersak ada, rupa-nya tidak.

## ABETMENT

114. Pushing a pillow under a somnolent man.

## EVIDENCE

115. Where there is smoke, there is fire.

116. Were there no wind, would the trees quiver?

117. An ox with long horns, even if he does not butt, will be accused of butting.

118. When I saw the ripples, I knew it was your paddle.

119. The deer dies because of his spoor, the pheasant because of his call.

120. As the hornbill passed, the twig was broken—(a damning coincidence).

121. Can one hide the sun (*or* an elephant's carcase) with a sieve (*or* conceal good works or a blatant crime)?

122. (A case may be as clear as) a white fowl flying by day and moreover descending in a courtyard in the sight of every one.

123. (Or it may be as obscure as) a black fowl that flies by night and settles on a screw-pine, making a rustle but invisible.

124. Mati gajah, tiada dapat belalai ; mati harimau, tiada dapat belang-nya.
125. Rumah sudah, pahat berbunyi.
126. Kechil-kechil, anak harimau.
127. Jangan di-ajar anak harimau makan daging.
128. Kalau langit hendak menimpa bumi, bolēh-kah ditahanan dengan telunjuk ?
129. Langit runtuh, bumi chayēr.
130. Hujan menimpa bumi, langit menyengkuap kepala.
131. Kuat burong karna sayap, kuat ketam karna sepit.
132. Kera lotong terlalu makan, tupai di-julai timpa perasaan.
133. Gajah sama gajah berjuang, pekandok mati di-tengah-tengah.

124. (So) an elephant may die and no one find his trunk, and  
a tiger die and no one find his striped coat.

## BELATED APPEAL

125. Though the house is finished, the chisel still sounds.

## RULERS AND CHIEFS

126. Though he is tiny, he (the princeling) is a royal tiger-cub.

127. Do not teach a tiger-cub to eat flesh.

128. If the sky were about to fall, could it be kept up by a finger?—(Can the weak withstand oppression?)

129. When the sky falls, the earth is dissolved.—(When a king comes down on a subject, he is ruined.)

130. Rain beats upon the earth and the sky canopies one's head.  
—(There is no escape from the rule of the all-embracing government.)

131. A bird's strength is in wings, a crab's strength in claws.  
(and a ruler's in his police).

132. When monkeys guzzle, squirrels on the lesser boughs suffer.  
—(The greed of the great ignores the hardships of the "little" man.)

133. When elephants fight, the mousedeer between them is killed.—(When princes fight, the "little man" suffers.)

134. Punggor rebah, belatok menumpang mati.

135. Siapa jadi raja, tangan aku ka-dahi juga.

134. When a dead tree falls, the woodpeckers share in its death.  
—(The fall of a chief ruins his followers.)

135. Whoever be king, my hands go up to my forehead (in homage).

136. Tepok tangan kanan, tiada akan membunyi.

137. Apa gadohkan ? Pengayoh sama di-tangan, perahu sama di-ayēr.

138. Takut titēk, lalu tumpah.

139. Biar titēk, jangan tumpah.

140. Kalau menampi, jangan tumpah padi-nya.

141. Biar tersēngēt, jangan tertiarap.

## IV. ECONOMIC LIFE

### CO-OPERATION

136. Clapping with the right hand only will not produce a noise.—(There must be reciprocity in commerce—and in love.)

### COMPETITION

137. Why worry? We each have paddle in hand and a boat on the river.

### PENNY WISE AND POUND FOOLISH

138. Fear to let fall a drop and you spill a lot.

### CAUTION

139. Pour drop by drop and don't spill.

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### CARE

140. If you are winnowing, don't spill the rice stalks (before you have got the grain).

141. Let the boat heel, but don't upset her.

142. Ikan biar dapat, serampang jangan pokah.
143. (Jangan) berbuat kerja saperti Yajuj wa-Majuj.
144. Harapkan anak, mata buta sa-belah ; harapkan orang lain, mata buta kedua-nya.
145. Kail sa-bentok, umpan sa-ēkor, sa-kali putus, sa-hari berhanyut.
146. Pantas tēwas.
147. Biar lambat, asal selamat.
148. Kurang kerat, rēngkoh yang lebēh.
149. (Jangan) nantikan nasi di-sajikan di-lutut.
150. Ringan tulang, berat perut.
151. Busut juga di-timbun anai-anai.
152. Alah bisa olēh biasa.
153. Tangan menetak, bahu memikēl.

142. Let the fish be caught without breaking the fish-spear.

143. (Do not) work (hastily and roughly) like Gog and Magog.

144. To depend on one's own child is blindness in one eye ; to depend on a stranger, blindness in both eyes.

145. One hook and one bait, and a broken line involves a day of aimless drifting.

146. Haste is waste.

147. Be slow but sure.

148. The less one cuts, the more one has to wrench.

## DILIGENCE

149. (Do not) wait for rice to be served up at your knees—  
(as you sit cross-legged).

150. Brisk bones make a heavy belly.

151. Even a mound can be heaped up by white ants.

152. Ever (= practice) beats clever.

153. His hand chops and his shoulders carry—(he is so industrious).

154. Penyu itu bertelor beribu-ribu, sa-orang pun tiada tahu ; ayam bertelor sa-biji, pechah sa-buah negeri.

155. (Saperti) gunting makan di-ujong.

156. Sebab tiada tahu menari, di-katakan lantai terjongkit (*or tanah lembap*).

157. Buang garam ka-dalam laut.

158. Tiada beban, batu di-galas.

159. Menambun tanah yang tinggi ; menggali tanah yang lekok.

160. Bergalah hilir, tertawa buaya ; bersuloh bulan terang, tertawa harimau.

161. Orang yang menunggu perigi, bila-kah ia mati dahaga ?

154. The turtle lays thousands of eggs without any one knowing,  
but when the hen lays an egg, the whole country is informed.

155. Scissors cutting at the point—(of the quiet effective worker).

## THE BAD WORKMAN

156. One unable to dance blames the unevenness of the floor  
(or the damp ground).

## WASTE OF EFFORT

157. Casting salt into the sea.

158. If he has no other burden, he'll take up a load of stones.

159. Heaping earth where there is a mound and digging it up  
where there is a hollow.

160. Pole as the stream carries you down, and even the crocodiles  
will laugh ; carry a torch by moonlight and the tigers  
will laugh.

## SELF-INTEREST

161. The guardian of a well ! When is he likely to die of  
thirst ?

162. Sebab berkelahi dengan perigi, akhirnya mati dahaga.
163. Tandok tiada terpulas, telinga terpulas.
164. Baik berjagong-jagong, antara padi masak.
165. Tiada rotan, akar pun berguna.
166. Ayer pun ada pasang surut.
167. Ayer bah kapal ta' hanyut, datang kemarau panjang.
168. Tiada akan pisang berbuah dua kali.
169. Tikus jatoh ka-dalam jelapang.
170. Puchok di-chita, ulam datang.
171. Dapat tebu rebah.

## QUARRELLING WITH BREAD AND BUTTER

162. Because he quarrelled with the well, in the end he died of thirst.

## WHERE THERE'S A WILL, THERE'S A WAY

163. If the horn cannot be twisted, the ear can.

164. It is well to put up with maize perpetually before the rice is ripe.

165. If there is no rattan, a creeper serves.

## A TIDE IN THE AFFAIRS OF MEN

166. Even water ebbs and flows.

167. If a ship does not float with the flood tide, there comes a long drought.

168. A banana tree will not bear fruit twice (nor a lost chance recur).

## GOOD LUCK

169. The rat has fallen into a rice-bin.

170. One hoped for green stuff and got prepared food.

171. Lighting on sugar-cane ready cut.

172. Tarēk rambut di-dalam tepong.

173. Jong pechah, yu sarat.

174. Burong terbang, di-pipiskan lada.

175. Rusa di-hutan, sudah di-jerangkan belanga.

176. Harapkan guntor di-langit, ayēr di-tempayan di-churahkan.

177. Belum dudok, belunjor dahulu.

178. Tolak tangga, berayun kaki.

179. Lagi jatoh di-timpa tangga.

180. Ikan di-gulai sudah melompat.

## AN EASY TASK

172. Like pulling a hair out of flour.

'TIS AN ILL WIND DOES NO ONE ANY GOOD

173. When a ship breaks up, sharks get their fill.

COUNTING ONE'S CHICKEN BEFORE THEY ARE  
HATCHED

174. While the bird is on the wing, pepper is being crushed  
(to spice it).

175. While the deer is in the forest, the cooking-pot is put on  
the fire.

176. From reliance on the sound of thunder in the sky (as a  
portent of rain), the water in one's jar is poured away.

177. Stretching out the legs before getting a seat.

## ERROR AND FAILURE

178. Kick away the ladder and one's feet are left dangling.—  
(One falls between two stools.)

179. One not only falls but is crushed by the ladder.

180. The fish in the curry has jumped (out of the pot).

181. Hendak bertanggok kapada ikan, sudah tertanggok kapada batang.
182. Isi lemak dapat ka-orang, tulang bulu pulang ka-kita.
183. Getah terbangkit, kuaran tiba.
184. Terlepas dari rahang buaya, masok ka-dalam mulut harimau.
185. Takutkan hantu, pelokkan bangkai.
186. Tidak hujan, lagi bēchak ; ini 'kan pula hujan.
187. Saperti ayam, kuis pagi makan pagi, kuis petang makan petang.
188. Sa-puloh jong datang, anjing bōchawat ēkor juga.
189. Terlintang berisi ayēr, tertiarap berisi tanah.

181. I wanted to catch a fish and caught a snag.

182. The flesh and the fat have gone to others and the bones and feathers are left for us.

183. When the bird-lime has been taken up, the pigeons arrive.

## OUT OF THE FRYING PAN INTO THE FIRE

184. Out of the jaws of the crocodile into the mouth of the tiger.

185. From fear of a ghost to hug a corpse.

186. Before there was rain, it was muddy, and now there is rain.

## POVERTY

187. (The poor live from hand to mouth) like fowl which eat in the morning what they scratch up in the morning and eat in the evening what they scratch up in the evening.

188. Ten junks may arrive (laden), but a dog's only covering remains his tail.

189. (Cursed with poverty one is like an empty coconut shell) = turned upwards it is filled with water, and turned downwards with earth.

190. Tali Manila menjadi sabut.

191. Bukit jadi paya, paya jadi bukit.

192. Minta darah pada daing.

193. Rendam, ta' basah.

194. Ayēr di-genggam tiada tiris.

195. Gajah lalu di-beli, kosa tidak terbeli.

196. Chēkil berhabis, lapok bertedoh.

190. (A bankrupt is) a rope of Manila hemp that has become  
a rope of coconut fibre.

191. The hill may become a swamp, and a swamp become a  
hill.—(The rich may be put down and the poor exalted.)

## THE MISER

192. Ask a dried fish for blood!—(Try to get blood out of  
a stone.)

193. Soaked in water, he will not get wet.

194. Water will not slip through his grasp.

195. An elephant he will buy, but not its goad.

196. The extreme of meanness is not to remove mildew.

197. Buat baik berpada-pada, buat jahat jangan sa-kali.

198. Hilang bini, bolēh di-chari ; hilang budi, badan chelaka.

199. Sebab nila sa-titēk, rosak susu sa-belanga.

200. Kalau kerbau, di-pegang tali-nya ; kalau manusia, di-pegang mulut-nya.

201. Kata tidak di-pegang-nya,  
Janji tidak di-tepat-nya. -

202. Terdorong kaki, badan merasa<sup>c</sup>, terdorong lidah, emas  
pada-nya.

## V. MORALITY

### THE EVEN MEAN

197. Do a reasonable amount of good and never do evil.

### LOST CHARACTER

198. A lost wife can be replaced, but the loss of character spells ruin.

### ONE SLIP MAY RUIN

199. Because of one drop of indigo, a whole pot of milk is spoilt.

### THE TONGUE

200. Buffaloes are held by cords, man by his words.

201. His word is not kept nor his promises fulfilled.

202. The body pays for a slip of the foot and gold pays for a slip of the tongue.

203. Terlangsung perahu, bolēh balik ;  
Terlangsung chakap, ta' bolēh balik.

204. Beberapa tajam pisau parang, tajam lagi mulut manusia.

205. Lidah berchabang bagai biawak.

206. Chakapan sa-jengkal di-bawa satu hasta.

207. Gendang raya bunyi deras, ta' tahu diri-nya berongga.

208. Tahu makan, tahu simpan.

209. Ajar buaya berenang.

210. Ada-kah buaya menolak bangkai ?

211. Bumi mana yang tiada kena hujan ?

212. Mana semut mati, kalau tidak dalam gula ?

203. A boat that has sped too far can return, but there is no return for the spoken word.

204. Daggers and spears are not as sharp as tongues.

205. There is the (insincere) tongue forked like that of the monitor-lizard.

206. Give him three inches of talk and he will carry away a cubit.—(He will make the most of a bit of scandal.)

207. The big drum beats fast but does not realize its hollowness.

## MUM'S THE WORD

208. If you know how to eat, know how to retain.

## VICE

209. (Fancy) teaching a crocodile to swim !

210. Will a crocodile reject a corpse (or man abjure accustomed vices) ?

211. Where is there earth that escapes rain (or man unspotted by sin) ?

212. Where does the ant die except in sugar ?

213. Ikut hati, mati ; ikut rasa, binasa.

214. Sa-ēkor kerbau membawa lumpor, semua terpalit.

215. Anjing ulang bangkai.

216. Ékor anjing beberapa pun di-urut akan dia, tiada juga betul.

217. Ketam menyurohkan anak-nya berjalan betul.

218. Burong gagak, jikalau di-mandikan dengan ayēr mawar, tiada akan menjadi putēh bulu-nya.

219. Siapa makan chabai, ia-lah merasa pedas.

220. Siapa makan nangka kena getah-nya.

221. Tepong-nya ia mahu, kuēh-nya pun ia mahu.

222. Beri betis, hendak paha.

213. It's no good to follow one's mood ;  
To follow lust brings man to dust.

214. One muddy buffalo will sully a herd.

215. Dogs return to a carcase (as men to sin).

216. However much a dog's tail is stroked, it will never be straight.

217. The crab instructed its young to walk straight.

218. Wash a crow with rose-water, its feathers will not become white.

#### AS ONE SOWS, ONE REAPS

219. It is the eater of chillies whose mouth feels hot.

220. It is the eater of jack-fruit who gets smeared with its gum.

#### GREED

221. He wants both the (unbaked) flour and the cake.

222. Give him a leg and he'll want a thigh.

223. Asal berisi tembolok, senang hati.

224. Ladang orang berlari-lari, ladang sendiri berjangkah-jangkah.

225. Sokong membawa rebah.

226. Harapkan tongkat, tongkat membawa rebah.

227. Pagar makan padi.

228. Telunjuk merusok mata.

229. Buaian di-gunchang, anak di-chubit.

230. Mulut di-suap pisang, pantat di-jangkit duri.

231. Hidong di-chium, pipi di-gigit.

232. Layar timpa tiang.

## SELFISHNESS

223. Provided his crop is full, he is happy.

224. Over the fields of others he goes running, over his own he picks his way.

## TREACHERY

225. The prop lets one down.

226. Trust a staff, and the staff lets one down.

227. The fence devours the crop—(of breach of trust by an employee).

228. The forefinger pokes the eye.

229. The cradle is rocked but the baby is pinched.

230. A banana is put into the mouth, while the rump is hooked with thorns.

231. While the nose is being kissed, the cheek is bitten.

232. The sail knocks down the mast—(of betrayal by friend or relative).

233. Mandi, biar basah.
234. Berdawat, biar hitam.
235. Genggam bara api, biar jadi arang.
236. Mati-mati berminyak, biar lēchok.
237. Alang-alang menyelok pekasam, biar sampai ka-pangkal lengan.
  
238. Bicharakan rumput di-halaman orang, di-halaman sendiri rumput sampai ka-kaki tangga.
239. Bintang di-langitd dapatdi -bilang ; arang di-muka tiada sedar.
240. Sa-ēkor kuman di-benua China dapat di-lihat ; gajah sa-ēkor bertēnggēk di-batang hidong, tiada sedar.
  
241. Jaras kata-nya raga jarang.
242. Udang hendak katakan ikan.

"THE SIN I IMPUTE TO EACH FRUSTRATE GHOST  
IS THE UNLIT LAMP AND THE UNGIRT LOINS"

- 233. When you bathe, get wet.
- 234. If you get inked, get black.
- 235. If you grasp live fuel, grasp it till it becomes charcoal.
- 236. If you use oil, let your hair be drenched.
- 237. If you dip your arm into the pickle-pot, let it be up to the elbow.

#### THE MOTE AND THE BEAM

- 238. Concerned over the grass on a neighbour's lawn, while the grass on one's own grows up to the doorstep.
- 239. He can count the stars in heaven but is unaware of the smut on his nose.
- 240. He can see a louse as far away as China but is unconscious of an elephant on his nose.

#### THE POT AND THE KETTLE

- 241. The creel criticizes the basket for its wide mesh.
- 242. The lobster wanted to reproach the fish (for being dirty).

243. (Jangan) ukor baju di-badan sendiri.

244. Harimau mati, tinggal belang-nya ; gajah mati meninggalkan tulang-nya.

## EGOTISM

243. (Do not) measure another's coat on your own body.—  
(Do not judge others by your own standard.)

## THE EVIL THAT MEN DO LIVES AFTER THEM

244. When a tiger dies, he leaves his stripes ; when an elephant dies, he leaves his bones.

245. Bingong makanan si-cherdēk,  
Si-tidor makanan si-jaga.

246. Katak di-bawah tempurong.

247. Belakang parang pun, jikalau di-asah, neschaya tajam.

248. Sahaya bukan budak makan pisang.

249. 'Akal akar.

250. Diam ubi, berisi,  
Diam besi, berkarat-karat.

251. Ikan terkirap, jala tiba.

252. Kita baharu chapai pengayoh, orang sudah tiba ka-sa-berang.

253. Dudok saperti kuching, melonipat saperti harimau.

## VI. THE INTELLECT

### THE CLEVER AND THE FOOLISH

245. Fools are the prey of the smart ;  
Sleepy heads the prey of those awake.

246. (The untravelled living like) a frog under a coconut shell.

247. Even the back of a wood-knife can be whetted to sharpness.—(Even the dense can be trained for some purpose.)

248. I am not a banana-eating child.—(I was not born yesterday.)

249. The cunning of the creeper—(adaptability).

250. The resting yam swells every day,  
While iron rusting wastes away  
—(of intelligence that develops steadily).

251. As soon as there is the flash of a fish, the casting-net is over it—(of a man quickly "on the spot").

252. We have just clutched our paddles, while they (being alert)  
have crossed the river.

253. He sits (as quiet as) a cat ; at springing he is a tiger—  
(of a man quick in council or war).

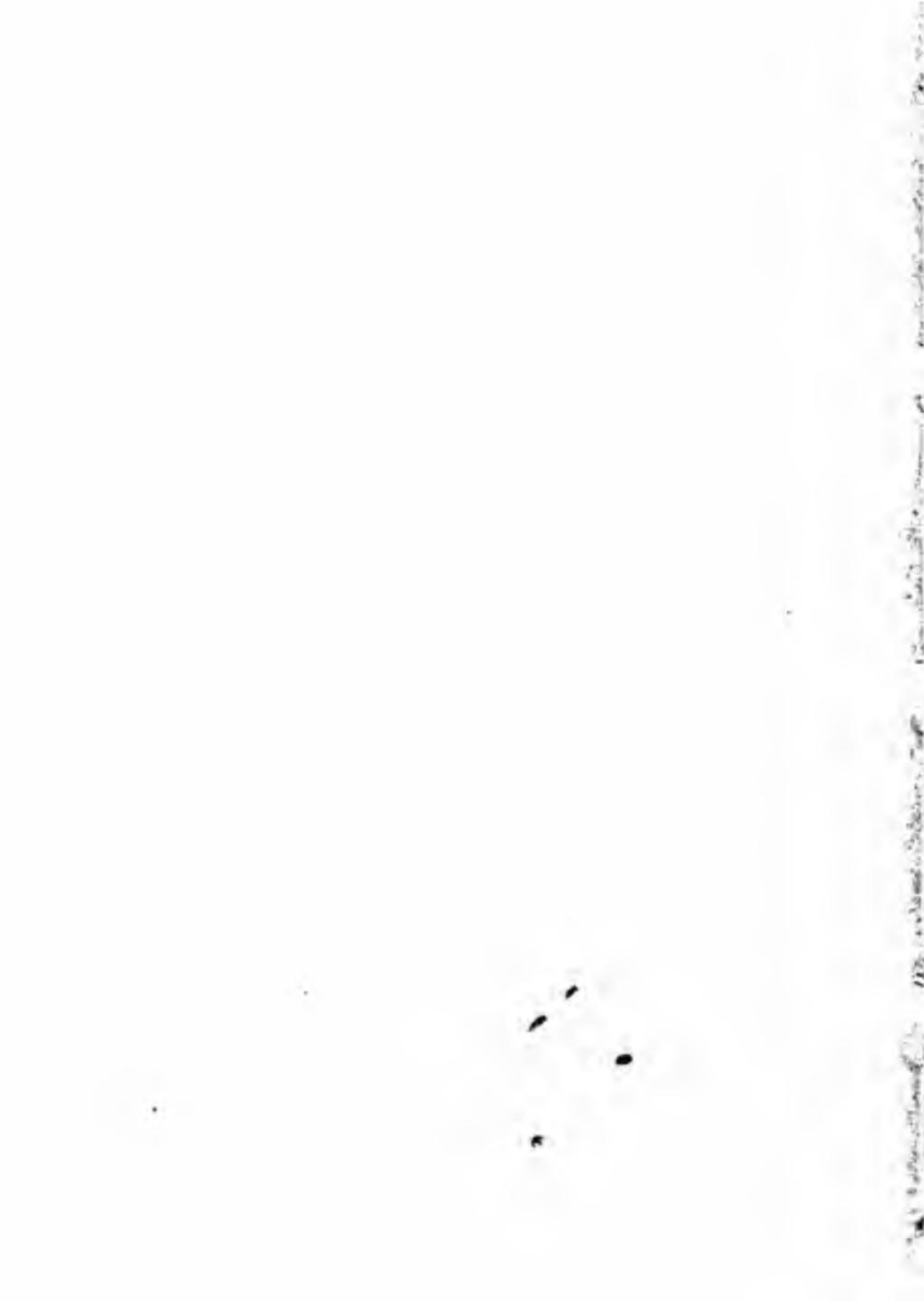
254. Ayēr yang penoh di-dalam tong tiada berkochak, melainkan sa-tengah tong itu.
255. Kemenyan sa-besar lutut, jika tiada terbakar, mana 'kan berbau ?
256. Buah padi, makin berisi, makin rendah ; buah padi yang hampa, makin lama, makin tinggi.
257. Padi, makin berisi, makin tundok ; lalang, makin lama, makin tinggi.
258. Kalau beranak, ikut kata bidan.
259. Segan bertanya, sesat jalan.

## LEARNING

- 254. A bucketful of water does not splash about, only a bucket half full splashes.—(The truly learned are quiet and modest.)
- 255. A piece of incense may be as large as the knee but, unless burnt, emits no fragrance.—(Hoarded wisdom is useless.)
- 256. The fuller the ear is of rice-grain, the lower it bends ; empty of grain, it grows taller and taller.—(The wise are modest ; the empty-headed assertive.)
- 257. The fuller the ear is of rice-grain, the lower it bends ; but rank grass grows taller as it grows older.

## EXPERT ADVICE

- 258. If you are in child-bed, obey the midwife.
- 259. If you are reluctant to ask the way, you will be lost.



## APPENDIX

### MINANGKABAU PROVERBS OF NEGRI SEMBILAN (*Introduction, pages 10-13*)

Di-anjak layu, di-anggor mati.

Bujor lalu, lintang patah.

Enau sa-batang, dua sigai ;  
Sa-jinjang dua pelesit.

Bunyi godam di-hutan merengangkan ;  
Bunyi baji di-luar merapatkan.

Menumbok di-lesong,  
Menanak di-periok.

Bacha dari alif  
Bilang dari esa

Kelebēhan umat dengan muafakat,  
Kelebēhan nabi dengan ma'ajizat ;  
Bulat ayēr karna pematong,  
Bulat manusia karna muafakat.

Bersurih ba' (gai) si-pasin,  
Berlondar ba' (gai) langkitang,  
Berbau ba' (gai) machang.  
Ka-hulu ta' tentu gaung-nya,  
Ka-hilir ta' tentu kuala.

Mana anjing menyalak, di-situ biawak memanjal  
 Mana temiang terentak, di-situ tanam-tanaman jadi,  
 Mana kayu tumbang, di-situ chendawan tumboh,  
 Kilat beliong kapada kaki,  
 Kilat pisau kapada tangan.

Kalau bertangkai, bolēh di-jinjingkan ;  
 Kalau bertali, bolēh di-hēlakan.

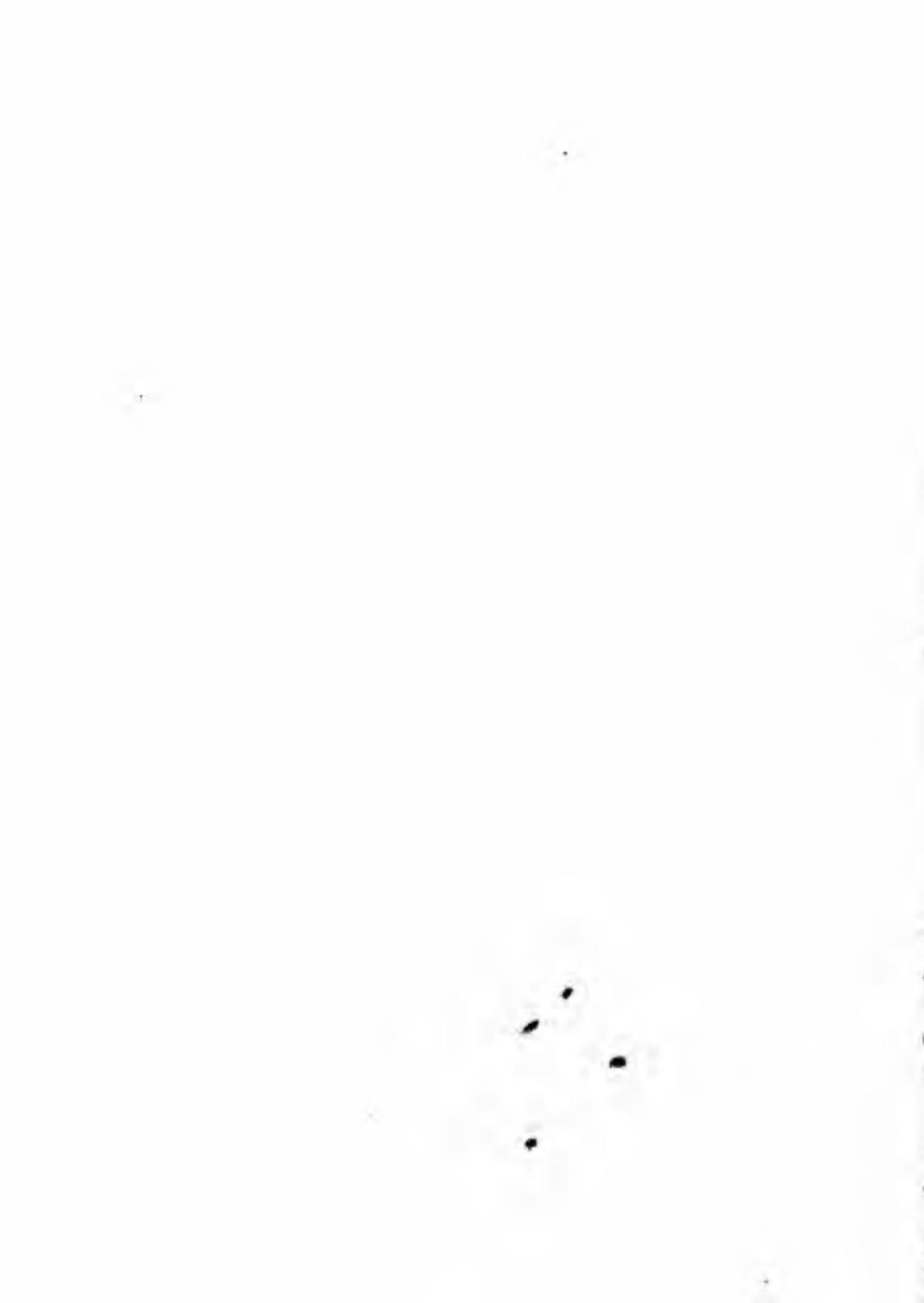
Limau masam sa-belah,  
 Perahu karam sa-kerat.

Timun pada dia, pisau pada dia ;  
 Lilis tebal, tiada siapa menegah ;  
 Limau nipis, tiada siapa suroh.

Putus tali, putus kelawan,  
 Putus kelikir, rempong hidong.

"Ketok", kata ayam. "Kichau" kata murai ;  
 Bongkok dēk menganyam, silap mengelarai.

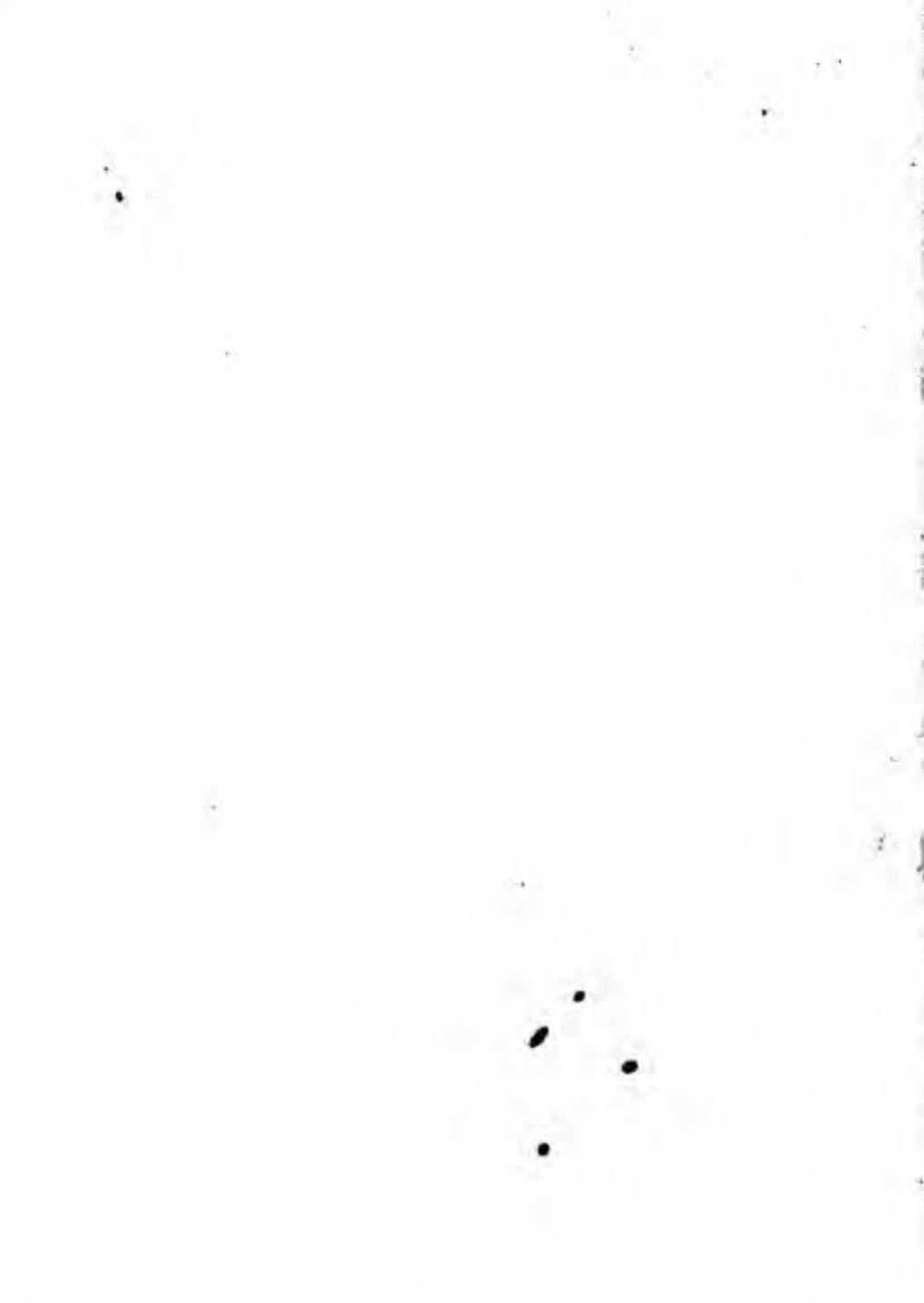
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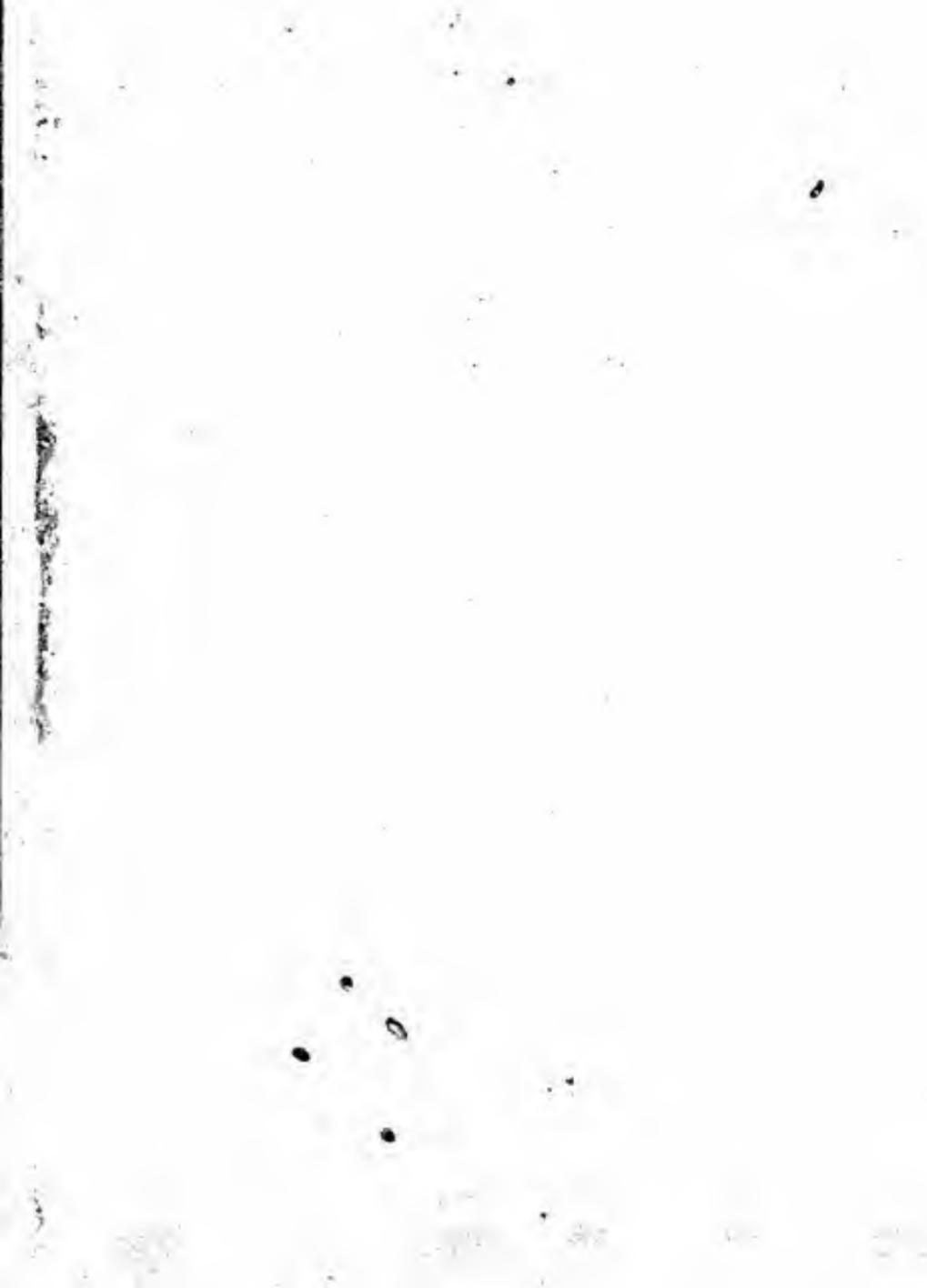
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Catalogue No. 398.909595/Win-7827

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Title—Malay proverbs.

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